

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

HAMILTON VILLAGE

PHILADELPHIA

April, 1933.

To the Communicants of St. Mary's Church:

The time has arrived to inform the congregation of the true state of affairs in St. Mary's Parish.

On March 27, 1932, the Accounting Warden presented to the Vestry an alarming financial report concerning the decrease in the church revenue. This report was referred to a special committee, Mr. George Hall, Rector's Warden, Mr. William I. Rutter, Accounting Warden and Mr. Roland Kent.

This committee reported on April 12, and suggested economies, consisting mainly of a 25% reduction in the Rector's salary, curtailment of his summer vacation and removal of the telephone from the rectory. A concluding recommendation was: "Lastly to consider, if the time is not ripe, for the matter of merging with another parish."

At the next meeting of the Vestry the rector presented a Budget, proposing a funding of the debt of \$19,000.00, in mortgages and notes, contracted before the rector came to St. Mary's.

The offer of a reduction in the rector's salary was accepted but the budget was rejected.

On June 22, 1932 the following letter was received by the Rector from the Vestry:

"By the action of the Vestry of St. Mary's Church, taken at a meeting held Tuesday evening June 21st, the Secretary of the Vestry was instructed to send you a copy of a Resolution passed

by the unanimous vote of the Vestry. In accordance with that action there is herewith appended a copy of that resolution:

"Whereas, it is the judgment of the Vestry of St. Mary's Church, Hamilton Village, Philadelphia, and the feeling of many members of the parish, that the future welfare and the actual existence of the parish are dependent upon a change in the Rectorship, the Vestry of St. Mary's Church respectfully requests the Rector to offer his resignation.

"The Vestry hopes that the Rector will accede to this request promptly, since there seems no possibility that sufficient funds will be in hand to pay current salaries and expenses during the Summer."

(Signed) Frederick Ehrenfeld,
Sec. of The Vestry of
St. Mary's Church.

THE ACCUSATION.

The Rector attended the next meeting of the Vestry and requested an explanation of this extraordinary communication. He was informed by Mr. Kent that the reasons were: That the congregations had fallen off, being smaller than when he came, and that the revenues had likewise decreased.

It is a matter of common observation that despite many deaths and removals, the congregations have not fallen off but are actually larger than for years.

Surely the Rector cannot be held accountable for the great depression and neighborhood bank failures.

The Rector was asked to resign "promptly" which is defined as meaning immediately. When the Vestry was asked if it proposed to throw the Rector into the street, no member of the Vestry expressed any concern or made any comment.

Later on July 26, 1932, the Vestry informed the Rector that, "It was agreed that the use of the word 'promptly' in the motion passed on June 21st, was not intended as meaning 'immediately' in the discussion at the meetings, October first, it was mentioned several times as the earliest date on which your resignation, if offered, could be expected to take effect."

The Rector refused to resign.

It is well at this point to remind the congregation of the state of affairs in St. Mary's Parish when the Rector took charge in 1927.

It was well known in the Diocese that St. Mary's was about to close its doors. The congregation had pitifully dwindled and was dispirited. The parish was heavily mortgaged and in debt and the revenue small. The Buildings were in a shocking state of disrepair, the Church particularly shabby, and the inside walls were badly stained everywhere from constant running leaks. The heating plant was inadequate and leaking poisonous gases.

Altogether it was a forlorn hope, but despite the advice of Bishop Garland, the Rector accepted the call because it *was* a forlorn hope and he trusted to be able to keep the Church open. This he had done with moderate success until the Vestry entered upon this course of action. In passing, it might be said, all the buildings have been put into a state of complete repair by the Rector without expense to the Vestry, including a stone wall in the rear of the property. A new and complete heating plant has been installed for both the Church and Parish House, saving \$650.00 yearly on the coal bill.

In order to prove their contention that the congregations had fallen off and the contributions had decreased, Mr. and Mrs. Rowland Kent and Miss Ma-

quire, members of the Vestry, and others, influenced by them, cancelled their subscriptions and later absented themselves from the services of the Church. The Church is now being governed by absentee, non-contributing Vestrymen.

Yet in spite of their action the congregations have increased and the contributions from the rest of the congregation have remained about the same. This is said having in mind the lowered incomes and decreased giving ability of the congregation.

It is the business of the Vestry to manage the financial affairs of a Church.

THE TRIAL.

October First having arrived and the desired resignation of the Rector not having been presented, the Vestry petitioned the Bishop and Standing Committee to dissolve the Pastoral relations between the Rector and St. Mary's Parish.

Accordingly the Rector was summoned to appear before the Bishop and Standing Committee in October.

It was a trial without written charges, the Rector being ignorant of the nature of his offense. He was therefore unable to prepare or present a defense.

This meeting was addressed by a representative of the Vestry Mr. Frederick Ehrenfeld (a communicant of St. James Church).

In an extemporaneous address Mr. Ehrenfeld made an attack on the Rector, alleging many things of which he could not possibly have personal knowledge and which were evidently untrue.

Mr. William I. Rutter, the Accounting Warden, presented the financial side of the question, concluding with the remark that he considered it for the best in-

terests of St. Mary's that the Rector resign. Questions by members of the Standing Committee developed the fact that the mortgages on the Church and Rectory were secured thirteen and eight years ago respectively. At the request of the President of the Standing Committee the Rector made comments on the financial condition of the Parish only.

THE ACQUITTAL.

On November the 9th, the Bishop sent the Rector the following letter:

"The Bishop has asked me to officially advise you that he has received a communication from the Standing Committee advising him not to dissolve the pastoral relations. He has, today, so advised the Secretary of the Vestry of St. Mary's Church. With kind regards,

(Signed.) The Bishop's Secretary.

In his letter to the Vestry the Bishop informed the Vestry that the affairs of St. Mary's Church were in better condition than half of the Churches in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

This action under any normal conditions, should have closed the whole matter. The judgment, above rendered, completely disproved the reasons for asking for the resignation of the Rector.

REYNOLDS D. BROWN, ESQ., ENTERS THE PICTURE.

But the Vestry not content with this final judgment of the proper ecclesiastical tribunal, called in Reynolds D. Brown, Esq., as an Attorney-at-Law to guide it.

THE VESTRY DECIDES TO GIVE THE CHURCH AWAY.

Mr. Brown is a member of the Church Foundation and is active in its affairs.

On January 3, 1933, the Vestry passed the following resolutions:

"Whereas the Vestry of St. Mary's Church, Hamilton Village, have with deep regret reached the conclusion that it is impossible for financial reasons for them to carry on the work of the Parish,

Resolved, that the Vestry hereby tender to the Church Foundation in trust for such purposes as the Bishop of Pennsylvania from time to time may appoint, all the property of St. Mary's Church, Hamilton Village, including the physical property and the endowment funds and all the property rights of every kind whatsoever.

"It is the expectation and wish of the Vestry that the support of the present members of the congregation will be continued on the premises under the direction of the Bishop."

This action of the Vestry is illegal for the following reasons:

1. The Rector as President of the Corporation was not consulted.
2. The consent of the congregation was not obtained in an open Parish Meeting called for that purpose.
3. The consent of the Bishop and Standing Committee was neither sought nor obtained.

THE VESTRY SAYS IT CANNOT ADMINISTER THE PARISH.

It will be noted that it is the Vestry and not the Rector which says, "that it is impossible, for financial reasons for them to carry on the work of the Parish."

This resolution was not presented to the Church Foundation.

Later, it is reported, Mr. Brown offered the Parish to the Christian Association of the University of Pennsylvania.

Yet as the matter now stands the Vestry assumes sole ownership of the property and funds of St. Mary's Church.

The Vestry has held several meetings in Mr. Brown's office.

THE SOLUTION.

A new Vestry is the solution. Although the Rector is free from blame, the Vestry persists in its opposition and refuses to co-operate with him in his efforts to keep St. Mary's open.

The Vestry seems determined to close it. But the Rector does not wish to close the Church and he will not resign under the circumstances.

In order that the matter may be settled and peace restored to the Church he suggests the resignation of the Vestry and the election of another which will co-operate with him.

FRANCIS C. STEINMETZ,
Rector.

April 10, 1933.

To the qualified voters of St. Mary's Church, Hamilton Village:

With a deep sense of their responsibility under difficult circumstances, the undersigned members of the Vestry submit the following brief statement:

1. A crisis has arisen in the affairs of our Parish. There is a considerable indebtedness at the moment, and income has been falling off to a point that makes the financial future very threatening. In addition to this, a large number of persons formerly worshipping in our church have gone to other parishes.

2. The undersigned members of the Vestry feel that the present unhappy conditions are the result of the ineffective leadership of the Rector, and that the only possible remedy is that his connection with the Parish should terminate. The Rector, on the other hand, has indicated that he believes that the Parish will prosper if he is permitted to have a Vestry which is in sympathy with him.

3. In the present unhappy relations between the Rector and the Vestry, which vitally affect the spiritual ministry of the Parish, we desire to lay the matter before the voters of St. Mary's for an expression of opinion, to be given at the coming election on Easter Monday, 4.30 to 6.30 P.M., in the Parish House. At that time there will be ten (10) places on the Vestry to be filled. The terms of four (4) of us expire at this time; five (5) others have presented their resignations, effective at Easter; one place has been vacant during the past year. The congregation should realize that this election will determine the matter so far as the present Vestry is concerned. If the qualified voters of the Parish support the present Vestry in its attitude they will naturally re-elect our entire group; if not, they will allow a Vestry to be elected who will doubtless support the Rector.

4. Two points remain to be noted. First, we earnestly desire that every voting member of the congregation should be present and vote on Easter Monday, that the views of the entire electorate may be fairly indicated; the ballot will be secret, and no one's preference will be disclosed by the vote. Second, we venture to express the hope that in no event will the affairs of St. Mary's be turned over to strangers who might be brought in from outside; it is our belief that only those who are worshipers here and are thoroughly familiar with the difficult financial and personal problems involved, can successfully meet this critical situation.

Faithfully yours,

(signed) H. Lamar Crosby	Roland G. Kent	Justus Sinexon
Frederick Ehrenfeld	J. Walter Maxwell	T. N. Walker
George Hall	Wm. I. Rutter	Wm. M. White

N.B.: The addressee of this letter is a legally qualified voter of St. Mary's Church, Hamilton Village, at the election to be held on April 17, 1933.

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POSTSCRIPT: After the preceding statement was prepared and duplicated, the Rector sent out to selected worshipers at St. Mary's a printed pamphlet purporting to give "the true state of affairs in St. Mary's Parish", and attacking the personal integrity of the Vestry. We have no desire to engage in a controversy, and should pass the pamphlet by without notice, except that it contains many mis-statements and misleading half-truths, and the error of these should in a few cases be corrected, for the information of the parishioners.

1. The Rector's plan for the "funding of the debt of \$19,000.00" was to use the principal of the Endowment Fund in this way. The Vestry did not think that this was a proper use of the Endowment Fund.

2. St. Mary's was not "about to close its doors" when the present Rector was called; and if he "accepted the call despite the advice of Bishop Garland", he did so by cable or transatlantic telephone, for he accepted the call by return mail, and Bishop Garland was then traveling in Europe.

3. As for the repairs to the buildings "without expense to the Vestry", the fact is that Vestrymen and their families, with others, contributed funds direct to the Rector; there was merely no record of this expense on the Accounting Warden's books.

4. As for the stone wall in the rear of the property, the stone (valued at \$200.00) was contributed by a Vestryman, and the cost of cement and erection (amounting to \$612.70) was contributed by another Vestryman, one former Vestryman, and two ladies of the congregation.

5. It is not true that the parishioners named in the pamphlet influenced others to cancel their subscriptions.

6. The Rector alleges that St. Mary's is governed by non-contributing Vestrymen. But the official voting list for the coming election contains the names of ten Vestrymen, including all those who have signed this letter, which means that in each of two preceding periods of twelve months every one has contributed at least five dollars to the current expenses of the Parish, as shown on the Accounting Warden's records.

7. It is not true that at the hearing before the Bishop and the Standing Committee one of the Vestry's representatives made, as the Rector says, many statements "which were evidently untrue".

8. It is not true that the action of the Vestry was illegal when it voted to give over the property of St. Mary's Church to the Church Foundation, in trust for such purposes as the Bishop may appoint; the Vestry, according to legal counsel, has full authority under the charter of the Corporation, which dates from 1830. This action was taken at a regular meeting of the Vestry, of which the Rector had notice, but he did not attend; the action was approved by a unanimous vote, including that of the present Rector's Warden.

9. The report that "Mr. Brown offered the Parish to the Christian Association of the University of Pennsylvania" is entirely unjustified. It was suggested, however, that if the Church Foundation accepted the title to St. Mary's Church the Bishop might be willing to authorize the use of the Church for the services carried on for the Episcopal students of the University, as well as for the present congregation.

Quite as misleading are certain omissions:

10. The Rector in his pamphlet does not mention the fact that at a meeting of the Vestry, held December 6, 1932, he threatened the Secretary of the Vestry with physical violence when he (the Secretary) attempted to answer a question asked by the Rector.

11. The Rector in his pamphlet does not mention the fact that he retained Robert P. Shick, Esq., as legal counsel several weeks before the Vestry, in self-protection, itself retained Reynolds D. Brown, Esq., as legal counsel.

12. The Rector in his pamphlet does not mention the fact that he received due notice of the meetings of the Vestry which were to be held in Mr. Brown's office; nor does he mention the fact that throughout these difficulties Mr. Brown has tried his best to bring about a friendly solution of the whole matter, satisfactory to all parties.

We could refute many other assertions contained in the Rector's pamphlet, but we consider it unnecessary. We ask you to indicate your judgment on the matters at issue by your vote at the election of Easter Monday. The enclosed ballot may be used at that time, with or without changes, which may be written in.

Faithfully yours,

(signed) H. Lamar Crosby	Roland G. Kent	Justus Sinexon
Frederick Ehrenfeld	J. Walter Maxwell	T. N. Walker
George Hall	Wm. I. Rutter	William M. White

From the Charter of St. Mary's Church, Article V, Section 1:

"The members of the Corporation who shall be qualified to vote at any election for Vestrymen and upon all questions which may come before any meeting of the Corporation, shall be all lay baptized persons of the age of twenty-one years or upwards who shall have been worshipers in this Church as their usual place of public worship for one year or upwards and who shall appear by the books of the Corporation to have contributed towards the current expenses of the Corporation, either by payment of pew rent or otherwise, during each of two successive years immediately preceding such election or meeting, not less than five dollars."

Famous Falsehoods

To the Communicants of St. Mary's Church.

Certain unscrupulous members of the Congregation have been spreading stories about Dr. Steinmetz that are half truths and lies. It seems to us, the Young People of the Church, that these stories be brought out into the open and examined under the light of truth and justice.

The Vestry has demanded the resignation of Dr. Steinmetz. To justify their action, they have made the following charges against him:

1. They have charged him with the falling off in Church attendance. To prove their point they have stopped attending services themselves and have used their influence with others.
2. They blame the decrease in Church income to our Rector. The Vestry does not divulge the fact that they, to prove their point, have cancelled their personal subscriptions.
3. The Rector is being held responsible for the Parish debt. Investigation of the Vestry's own books show that this debt was contracted two years prior to the date that Dr. Steinmetz became Rector of this Parish.
4. At the meeting of the Standing Committee, Dr. Erhenfeld charged the Rector with refusing Communion of a member of the Congregation. He withholds the further necessary information that the person to whom he was referring had to have the Chalice forcibly removed from his hands on the Sunday morning in question in order that there might be sufficient Wine left in the Cup to serve the remaining Communicants receiving that morning. Further, this person went about the next day bragging about the "good drink" of wine he had had in Church the previous day.
5. Dr. Steinmetz has been accused of not doing any Parish visiting, yet when one of the Young People was seriously ill with pneumonia, not a day passed during his illness that he did not receive a call from our Rector.
6. Dr. Steinmetz has been quoted as saying that he could not carry on the work of the Church. This is partly true. The full quotation is, "that he could not carry on the work of St. Mary's with the antagonistic vestry with which he now has to deal."

The above are some of the more serious charges that have been made against our Rector. There are others, so obviously untrue that no intelligent, serious minded Christian, and we are all supposed to be Christians, would not heed them.

So much for the charges made against Dr. Steinmetz. We would however, like to ask the Vestry for answers to the following questions:

1. When and where was the Parish meeting held at which the Vestry received the authorization of the Congregation to offer the Church property and endowments to the Church Foundation?
The Church at the time, was, and still is, a going concern. There are no records anywhere to show that such a meeting was held. The privilege of deciding such a question lies entirely in the hands of the congregation and must be brought before it at a publicly advertised Parish meeting.
2. The Vestry has admitted that it cannot carry on the financial end of the Church work. Yet when Dr. Steinmetz presented them with a plan, which had the approval of those to whom the Church is indebted and must therefore be a practical plan, they refused to accept it and follow its provisions. What logical reason can they give for their refusal other than that they will not cooperate in any way with the Rector in order to embarrass him as much as possible.

This is not the time to settle personal grudges. The Church throughout the country is losing its position of respect, primarily because of such hideous crimes, as that which has been perpetrated upon Dr. Steinmetz, that are being committed in the name of Christianity.

If the Vestry cannot cooperate with our Rector, then for the good of the Church, we, The Young People of St. Mary's, demand that they resign and make way for men that will.